

Monday, December 3rd, 2012

Dear Members of the House Natural Resources, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee:

I'm writing this letter to urge you to vote NO on SB1350, a bill to include Michigan's gray wolf in the game list and authorize a hunting season. I am opposed to adding wolves to the list of game species in Michigan and urge you to join me in this position. These are the reasons why:

There is no gray wolves overpopulation in Michigan. The comeback of the gray wolves in Michigan (called by many "one of the greatest wildlife survival stories in U.S. history") has taken a long time and, despite their recent delisting, their population is yet not fully recovered. At one time, gray wolves used to be present in all 83 counties and now they can be found almost exclusively in the Upper Peninsula.

Conflicts between wolves and humans are already being addressed. The state's current comprehensive wolf management plan has provisions that allow farmers and landowners to use lethal methods (when other non-lethal methods have been exhausted or are not available) to stop wolves from attacking their livestock or pets. I'm attaching to this letter excerpts of the Michigan Wolf Management Report that talk about this issue being addressed, and a link so you have access to the entire document (annex A).

Wolves have little impact on deer population and help balance our ecosystem. Misinformed claims have been quoted by the media regarding the impact wolves have had on the deer population. Annexed to this letter is the DNR's statement on this topic which says that the wolves' impact on deer is relatively small compared to other predators, pointing out the fact that they eat an unknown number of deer that have died of other causes, like winter conditions or deer-vehicle collisions (or diseases). Additionally, I am attaching the *Season Impressions from the Field* reports published in White-Tailed Deer, a DNR/MSU website (annex B). Through this website, several DNR wildlife biologists/technicians in different areas in Michigan report deer hunting conditions, hunters' perception on deer population and number/quality of deer brought into check stations. All Upper Peninsula reports indicate more deer than in past years, including more young ones. Please note that this is in areas where deer cohabitate with wolves. It is clear that the most killing of deer is done by humans, not wolves.

Michigan can continue to be a champion in wolf protection. We have seen other states declaring a war on wolves and allowing these predators to be massacred in large numbers under very cruel conditions. Don't allow this to happen in our beautiful state.

Please protect Michigan's gray wolves by voting NO on SB 1350.

Sincerely,

Italia Millan
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Annex A

Lethal methods and alternatives to be used by farmers, ranchers and landowners on wolves that prey upon their pets and livestock are already available under current legislation

From the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website:

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370_12145_12205-32569--,00.html

Wolves in Michigan

Lethal Control Regulations:

"The Michigan Legislature passed two laws in 2008 to allow livestock or dog owners, or their designated agents, to remove, capture, or, if deemed necessary, use lethal means to destroy a wolf that is "in the act of preying upon" (attempting to kill or injure) the owner's livestock or dog(s)."

From the *Michigan Wolf Management Plan* (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division Report No. 3484, July 10, 2008), developed by the Michigan Wolf Management Roundtable:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/Draft_Wolf_Management_Plan_030708_227742_7.pdf

"Lethal control will be a management option in situations where loss of livestock has been documented or where a wolf is in the act of depredating livestock; it will not be used as a preventative measure in areas where livestock depredation has not yet occurred. Similarly, lethal control will be a management option in specific areas where wolf attacks on free-ranging hunting dogs have been documented, but it will not be used as a preventative measure where attacks have not yet occurred."

"Lethal control would not be authorized when problems could be addressed through other, non-lethal methods. However, a livestock producer could be authorized to kill problem wolves when reasonable efforts to deter depredation have failed or when other feasible options are unavailable. Only the minimum level of lethal control necessary to resolve an ongoing depredation problem would be authorized."

Annex B

Wolves have little impact on deer population

From the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website:

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10363_10856_10905-150249--,00.html

The Impacts of Wolves on Deer in the Upper Peninsula

"Many Michigan residents are concerned about the impacts of wolves on the Upper Peninsula deer population. The extent of those impacts is influenced by many factors. However, compared to the deer mortality caused by other sources, including other predators, the impact of wolves on the deer population is relatively small... Wolves prey upon a variety of species, and the proportion of their diet comprised of deer changes continuously. Also, an unknown number of deer eaten by wolves may have died from other causes, such as winter conditions or vehicle collisions."

"Wolves and deer evolved together, and deer possess physical and behavioral adaptations for avoiding wolf predation."

From White-Tailed Deer, a DNR/MSU website:

<http://deer.fw.msu.edu>

Season Impressions from the Field **Upper Peninsula**

November 17th

"Check numbers at the Escanaba Field Office for the first three days of firearms season are the highest they have been since at least 2006 and may rise to the highest since 2004 by the end of the day. Hunters are reporting seeing more deer than in years past and many fawns. Over half of the bucks brought in have been two and a half years old or older." - *Vernon Richardson, DNR Wildlife Technician (Escanaba)*

"Checkstations are seeing very healthy looking deer, with excellent body conditions and antler development. Hunter perceptions are that there are many more deer this year and nicer bucks." - *Kevin Swanson, DNR Wildlife Biologist (Shingleton)*

November 16th

"The number of deer that have been checked is generally up a little from last year so far. Deer coming into the check stations have been in good condition, and antler development has also been good including on yearling bucks. It appears that more 2 ½ year old or older bucks are coming in so far compared to last year. Hunter satisfaction continues to improve, with hunters generally reporting seeing more deer than last year." - *Dave Jentoft, DNR Wildlife Biologist (Sault Ste Marie)*

"Checkstation numbers across the U.P. are above last year and some areas are double what they were last year indicating a very positive start to the season for many hunters. Nearly all hunters are reporting seeing more deer including bucks with many hunters seeing enough bucks that they

are comfortable passing on smaller bucks in order to wait for the one that they really want. Overall the U.P. firearm season is off to an excellent start and hunter satisfaction seems very high." -*Kristie Sitar, DNR Wildlife Biologist (Newberry) and Brian Roell, DNR Wildlife Biologist (Marquette)*

November 15th

"Conditions in the Crystal Falls area were very good... It didn't seem as though there was much rut activity occurring yet but hunters were reporting excellent sightings, higher than previous years and it appeared that this year had been a very good year for fawn production." Hunter numbers appear to be similar to last year. -*Monica Joseph, DNR Wildlife Biologist (Crystal Falls)*

"Hunting conditions in the Eastern Upper Peninsula were similar to the West with favorable weather. The lack of snow has made tracking difficult but hunters report seeing lots of deer and have a very positive outlook on the season. The deer being brought to checkstations have good antler development and noticeably improved body conditions in comparison with previous years." -*Kristie Sitar, DNR Wildlife Biologist (Newberry)*

"Opening day has been better than I expected. Since 1999, today was the most deer checked on a opening day in Marquette (23 in 2012; 7 in 2011). The 14 year average is 12 deer. We checked a lot of 2.5 year old bucks and the few 1.5 year old deer that had very nice antler development. Notably a 12 year old came in with a 4.5 year old 9 pointer with 32mm beams." -*Brian Roell, DNR Wildlife Biologist (Marquette)*